

# POSITION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY. FOREIGN ACADEMIES OF ART.

Owing to the extensive influence exercised by the Royal Academy on the public taste, the question which has lately arisen relative to the continuance of the grant of a building, cannot but awaken a lively interest even on the part of those votaries of the fine arts who are unconnected with this national institution. It is as one of these that I offer a few remarks, bearing chiefly on the institutions of a similar nature on the continent, whose prosperous condition, founded on the support of their respective Governments, militates strongly in favour of the like system of patronage in this country. In Germany, France, and Italy, we find academies established in all the principal towns, under the immediate control and support of Government. Prussia, in addition to the Academy at Berlin, has that of Düsseldorf, the fame of which justly extends over all Europe, and which, besides other advantages, receives from the Crown the spacious accommodation which is afforded by the old palace. The Berlin Academy is not only provided with a suitable building, but is also maintained by Government, the expenses being, however, partly defrayed by the profits of the annual exhibition, and by a slight charge made for the tuition given to the pupils. The salary of the professors is handsome, amounting to 600 thalers, or about 80*l.*, which is equal to double that amount in England. Their appointments are permanent, and unaffected by any falling off in the number of the pupils, or other changes in the schools; and the instructions which they give comprise all the principal branches of art, including landscape, and what is termed *genre*, or subjects from familiar life; besides which, large prizes are awarded for the best productions of the pupils. In Paris, the "Académie des Beaux Arts" appears to be established on a still more liberal footing, the instructions being gratuitous, and delivered by the first professors in a handsome and appropriate building, whilst the most successful students in each of the four principal branches of art are rewarded by being maintained for a certain period, at the expense of Government, at Rome, where France can boast of another academy, organized for this purpose, under the direction of one of her most eminent artists.

In Austria the establishment of academies of the fine arts, under the auspices of the imperial crown, extends even to the subordinate towns of Venice and Milan, in both of which, especially in the latter, a large number of pupils are gratuitously instructed in the various branches of art by the most skilled professors; all that is necessary for their perfect instruction being most liberally provided. The minds of the youths here receive the additional training which is derived from the study of the works of the best ancient masters, assembled under the same roof as the elementary schools.

Owing to latent causes, perhaps connected with the present political and social condition of Italy, the academies of painting in that country have not realized the fruits which might be expected to result from the possession of such treasures of art. That these failures are not the necessary consequence of a position dependent on Government, is sufficiently proved by the glorious results which have attended the foundation of academies, under royal patronage, at Düsseldorf and Munich. Works of so elevated a character as those which have been produced by the modern historical schools of painting in Germany could emanate from no source which is not purified and ennobled by the tutelary guardianship of sovereign protection. Art, like every true offspring of genius, is aspiring in its nature, and requires the aid of a supreme hand to raise its votaries to the highest station. Pecuniary remuneration may be awarded to talent and industry by private individuals; and this kind of stimulus, it cannot be denied, prevails to a large extent in this country. But when the necessities of life have been provided for, that honorary distinction is aimed at whose tabernacle is raised under the fostering shadow of royalty. Nor does art require the prestige only which is derived from the crown: the ideas expand with the space which is allowed for the designs which they suggest, and the vast halls and extensive walls

of palaces present the most effectual means for promoting the grand and the sublime in each style of art.

Such considerations as these afford sound and substantial grounds why an academy should be established under royal patronage, on a comprehensive and generalizing principle. With regard to the appropriation of a building for the use of the Royal Academy, this advantage, conceded at the period of its foundation, may be considered rather as an act of munificence on the part of the sovereign than as founded on any legal claim. But should we on this account entertain misgivings as to the present right of possession, seek a flaw in the title, or admit it only with a frown? The first planning of an institution involves an amount of difficulty, and requires a degree of energy and confidence, which, when this first trial has been made, are not necessary for the successive establishment of others on a similar footing. If the unusual amount of enterprise which presided at the foundation of the Royal Academy merited especial encouragement and support, why should it lose, or even weaken these claims, by a long period of successful, and—I believe, generally admitted—as most useful exertions?

We cannot but suppose that the most talented and persevering members of other less important academies of the fine arts, would behold with regret any change with reference to the Royal Academy which might tend to lower its position: all must feel, more or less, that an institution is wanted at the head of the hierarchy of art, to which other more humble societies may serve to prepare the way by successive and graduated stages. If no distinction be made, or exclusion exercised, with regard to the honours conferred by the head academy, there is no reason why the members of the other institutions, having before them the same prospects as artists at large, should not look up to the Royal and leading one as the necessary complement to their own, and have nothing more at heart than its success, influence, and aggrandizement.

We have followed with advantage the examples afforded by the continent with regard to the manner in which most of our national institutions have been thrown open to the public; also with regard to the decoration of our national buildings there has been a noble commencement, creditable to the first attempts of British art. If we would carry out still further the principle so advantageously adopted by foreign nations, of rendering painting, historical painting at least, truly national, we must extend rather than restrict the advantages which our academy enjoys. At present the privileges of the Crown connected with the Royal Academy appear to be chiefly those of confirming the diplomas granted to the Royal Academicians, and of sanctioning the appointment of the professors and officers,—a reservation which is just sufficient to reflect the splendour of royalty on this institution, without lessening the strength and stability which may be considered to result from an independent position. Whether the control exercised by Government over its affairs should be increased in proportion to the extension of its privileges, remains to be considered by those who have an intimate knowledge of the internal management of the Academy. It will, however, scarcely be denied that the present results of this management are fully commensurate with its resources, if it be considered that nearly 200 pupils are gratuitously instructed in the leading branches of art, that they derive the inducement to study which is afforded by gold and silver medals, and, occasionally, the additional encouragement of a free journey to Rome, granted to the most successful competitors. Whereas, these and other advantages, such as lectures, &c., are almost entirely defrayed out of the scanty means which are supplied by the annual exhibition.

It is with regard to this last department only, that the Royal Academy may be said to enjoy a practical superiority over other institutions devoted to the fine arts, resulting from the accommodation which is afforded in a national building. We do not doubt that any extension of this privilege would be followed by a corresponding diffusion of its advantages, and thus give to the operations of the aca-

demy an appearance of increased liberality in the eyes of artists at large. For however excellent the intentions of those on whom rest the onerous task of admitting and rejecting works of art, and however fair and impartial the rules which are laid down for the performance of this duty, requiring that the fate of every production should be decided anonymously, the large number which, for want of room, are compelled either to be rejected or misplaced, must necessarily remain a cause of dissatisfaction as long as there exists so palpable a disproportion between the number of pictures to be located and the means of disposing of them in a suitable manner. In the exhibition of the German academies, the works of French and other foreign artists are seen to occupy the best positions, beside the productions of the professors of these academies. The satisfactory development which in this country manifests itself of a kindly international spirit, makes us look forward to the time when, with increased means, we shall be able to respond more liberally to the appeal made by foreign industry to this large and influential community of art, and when we shall yield to none of the continental states in that courtesy and deference which are especially due to foreigners. H. TWINING.

## PURIFICATION OF DWELLINGS.

IN THE BUILDER of last Saturday there are some very pertinent remarks on the effluvia around farmyards and cottages, concluding with a hint as to emanations of the water-closet. Last October I addressed a letter to the Board of Health—when the plan of house visitation was in full operation—with a suggestion that a cesspool visitation might be attended with fully as much benefit. The connection between the cholera and the accumulation of those impurities which daily ought to be removed has been so amply demonstrated, that we need bring forward no additional proof thereof. I beg, then, to recommend to the public that during the approaching summer and autumn particular attention be paid to the daily cleansing of these most attractive sources of the cholera poison. The disinfection of these places all throughout the densely inhabited metropolis can be efficiently secured by the weekly application of the chloride of lime and whitewashing. This may be accomplished at a very trifling expense indeed, and though I am not quack enough to guarantee the non-appearance of the cholera by this mode of purification, I judge that a most important step will be gained thereby in securing the inhabitants from foul smells, at least, with probably a diminution of the number of low fevers which seem to be on the increase; and, assuredly, with the positive certainty of a less impure atmosphere than heretofore has been the lot of London. Whatever can subtract in any degree from the atmospheric impurity, *pro tanto* diminishes the virulence of every form of epidemic and endemic disorder; and this we conceive to be the proper time to put in active execution all the subordinate means we have at command to mitigate the severities of endemic disease. The intrinsic nature of cholera it would be out of place to inquire into here, but its immediate relationship with all organic decomposing impurities is contested by none. That the principle should be successful, it should be carried on throughout every street, close lane, and alley simultaneously; and as it is likely it will be some time ere an efficient system of sewerage can be put in active practice, this temporary expedient cannot, I think, with safety be neglected.

WILLIAM REID, M.D.

NEW PLANING MACHINE.—Mr. W. E. Newton, of Chancery-lane, has patented a planing machine, with two carrier wheels, and an endless band of metal plates binged together and fluted, the whole driven by bands and toothed gearing from any prime mover. The plank is introduced between the fluted surfaces of the two bands. The planes, eight in number, are adjusted at different angles to the plank by means of screws, and a bar presses on the plank by means of a spring. Both sides may be planed at same time by a second set of planes beyond the first.